

AIDS Lecture March 6, 1987

Address

By C. Everett Koop, MD, ScD  
Presented to the Joint Session on AIDS  
Of the California Legislature  
Sacramento, California  
March 6, 1987

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This speech was delivered sixteen days after the last speech I made on AIDS and ranks in importance with perhaps the top three lectures on this subject given to representatives of governing bodies. In addition to testimony before the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, I had the privilege of speaking to the Joint Session of Legislators in Texas and in California and then addressed the United Nations General Assembly on the same subject. This was the address given before the California Legislature.

On this occasion I really had to note that Californians was the first of our citizens to be identified as being the victim of AIDS back in June of 1981. They were the first to die of the disease and before the rest of the country knew about or truly understood the nature of this catastrophe, the people of California were already beginning to bury their dead.

The history of the development of AIDS and our knowledge of what to do about it was then presented step-by-step before I recognized the leadership of the Legislature of the State of California and its governor, George Deukmejian. California was the first state to establish mandatory reporting of the disease and a statewide registry of cases. Within the week of the approval of the blood tests for AIDS (antibodies to the virus) California had its own emergency regulations in place to protect the blood supply. California was also very careful to build into the law a respect for confidentiality and an understanding of the overwhelming burden it could be for a person to learn that he or she has AIDS and will soon die.

I raised the question of the number of babies born with AIDS, and noted that according to the best of our understanding, that some of them will die within the first year or two of life; indeed we were already seeing that occur. But other children will carry the virus and may not exhibit any symptoms of an AIDS-related disease until they are well into their school years.

It was appropriate before a legislative body to try to put the costs into dollars and cents on the table. I noted that the federal contribution that year would be \$416 million with about \$300 million of that in research, \$100 million for public education and \$10 million for patient care. I also noted that California by itself had spent nearly half the total dollars expended by all state governments on AIDS since 1983 – some \$56 million so far, apportioned among patient care, public information, and research. I then gave the prediction of the experts that by 1991, the total national bill for caring for AIDS would be \$16 billion a year, or twice what we were spending that current year to support all the programs of the entire U.S. Public Health Service. I warned that AIDS related conditions (ARCs) such as pneumonia and cancer would increase (the term ARCs fell into eventual

disease). It didn't seem out of place to philosophize a little about how we could live so that we may be a humane and civilized people, noting that it was difficult to imagine this country ever becoming financially bankrupt, but our society – like every other society in human history – always runs the risk of becoming morally and ethically bankrupt. This we must never let happen.

Inasmuch as sex education and my comments about it continued to rile the American public, I had been spending more and more time in my lectures talking about the justification for AIDS education. In my report to the American people released on October 22, 1986, I had said: “ Education about AIDS should start in early elementary school and at home so that children could grow up knowing the behavior to avoid to protect themselves from exposure to the AIDS virus. The threat of AIDS can provide an opportunity for parents to instill in their children their own moral and ethical standards.”

People were unduly alarmed by that phrase, “Early elementary school” and the first thing they asked was, “Does that mean kindergarten?” To that my answer was, “I’m afraid so.”

I had concluded the aforementioned report with the quote: “Education concerning AIDS must start at the lowest grade possible as part of any health and hygiene program...there is now no doubt that we need sex education in schools and that it must include information on heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The threat of AIDS should be sufficient to permit a sex education curriculum with a heavy emphasis on prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.”

I might have, if given the opportunity, taken word “early” out of the first quotation, but I would not remove a single word from the last. I noted that California officially, through their governor and representatives had endorsed the need to begin teaching about AIDS no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Subsequent history of the behavior of pre-adolescence shows that that is far too late to begin. California also had adopted, one way or another, a curriculum with elements that introduced human sexuality and reproductive health in a positive and caring way to children in elementary grades – generally speaking the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

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Abstinence  
Age of starting AIDS education  
AIDS & sensitive & affirmative human  
relationships  
AIDS education  
“AIDS -related complex”  
Babies as innocent victims of AIDS  
“Baby Doe”  
“Baby Fae”  
Blood tests for AIDS  
California’s early response to AIDS  
Californians as the first to experience the  
problems of AIDS  
Confidentiality in reference to AIDS

Danger of moral & ethical bankruptcy  
Economics of AIDS  
Economic predictions  
History of the development of our  
knowledge of AIDS  
Joint Sessions of state legislature  
"Katie Beckett"  
Management and prevention  
Mandatory reporting of AIDS  
Mutually faithful monogamy  
Obligation & privilege parents have as sex  
educators  
Parents as sex educators  
Report of the School Health Task Force for  
Los Angeles  
State health officers  
Statewide registry of cases  
Transplantation of organs

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Christian Life Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention  
National Coalition of Black & Lesbian Gays  
National Conference of Catholic Bishops  
National Council of Churches  
National Education Association  
National PTA  
Synagogue Council of America  
"The Bridge of San Luis Rey"  
The Washington Business Group on Health  
U.S. Public Health Service